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New York

President:	Mr. Fall	(Guinea)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Miranda
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Ngoubeyou
	Chile	Mr. Valdés
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons and mercenary activities: threats to peace and security in West Africa.

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03-28391 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons and mercenary activities: threats to peace and security in West Africa

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations and the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo to participate in our discussion.

On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Pierre Osho, Minister of State for Defence of Benin, His Excellency Mr. Jean-De-Dieu Somda, Minister assigned to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso in charge of Regional Cooperation, His Excellency Mr. Baboucarr-Blaise Ismaila Jagne, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Monie Captan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liberia, His Excellency Mr. Cheick Tidiane Gadio, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Senegal, His Excellency Mr. Roland Y. Kpotsra, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Togo, and Her Excellency Ms. Diallo Mbodji Senn, Minister of Labour and Vocational Training of Mali. I invite all the aforementioned Ministers to take the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

I also invite the representatives of Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone to take the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations and rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Said Djinnit, Interim Commissioner for Peace, Security and Political Affairs of the African Union, to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations and rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Nana Effah-Apenteng, representative of the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States, to take a seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations and rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations and rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ibrahima Sall, Regional Director, Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development, to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on the agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Before opening the floor, I wish to request all participants to limit their statements to no more than seven minutes, in order to enable the Council to work efficiently within its timetable. I thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

I welcome the presence among us of the Secretary-General. Before giving him the floor, I would like to express my deep thanks to the Ministers and their representatives, the representative of Interim Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States and the Regional Director of the Programme for Cooperation and Assistance for Security and Development. Despite of their heavy workload, these people agreed to come to participate in this important workshop, which is being held in particularly difficult circumstances, with greater Security Council activity due to current concerns, in particular the Iraqi crisis. I am convinced that in spite of those challenges, our work will proceed in a spirit of calm and cooperation.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I would like to thank the Security Council for focusing its attention, even at this critical moment when all our minds are on Iraq, on a subject which is of great importance to the welfare and well-being of millions of people in another region of the world, namely West Africa.

The uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the use of mercenaries sustain conflict, exacerbate violence, fuel crime and terrorism, promote cultures of violence, violate international humanitarian law and impede political, economic and social development.

The easy availability of small arms and light weapons is strongly linked with the dramatic rise in the victimization of women and children and with the phenomenon of child soldiers. Light automatic weapons can be carried and fired by children as young as nine or ten. This link is particularly evident in West Africa, where the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and now Côte d'Ivoire have been fuelled in no small part by an unregulated trade in small arms — often paid for with the proceeds from the illicit exploitation of natural resources.

The flood of arms in the region has been accompanied by — and, indeed, has facilitated — a rise in the activities of mercenaries. Armed men from within the subregion and beyond have moved across borders: a large force of fighters, unemployed but armed and willing to fight for whomever will pay them most. This supply side of the mercenary problem is closely linked, in turn, to the failure to adequately fund and implement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and to the failure to provide enough assistance to countries such as Liberia and Guinea-Bissau in restructuring their armed forces as part of post-conflict peace-building arrangements. The result in Liberia, for example, is that tens of thousands of former combatants face little or no prospect of gainful employment, leaving them more susceptible to recruitment as combatants once again.

The actions of unscrupulous and predatory arms merchants also bear special mention. Their lack of restraint in the sale and transfer of their products to zones of tension in West Africa and beyond directly translates into more unnecessary suffering and instability.

The problem is easy to diagnose. The more complex challenge is to mount an effective response. Fortunately, the international community and the countries concerned are not without tools with which to fight back.

Legal instruments and other international agreements offer one such avenue.

The Programme of Action on Small Arms, adopted by the international community in 2001, offers a blueprint for action at all levels, including such steps as increased cooperation with Interpol and the World Customs Organization.

The International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries came into force in October 2001; I urge all West African countries to join Mauritania, Mali, Senegal and Togo in ratifying this vital instrument.

This Council has demanded that countries in the Mano River Union cease military support for armed groups in neighbouring countries and refrain from any actions that might contribute to destabilization of the situation on their borders. The Council has also imposed arms embargoes, another essential step.

The heads of State of the Economic Community of West African States, for their part, have agreed to work more intensively towards making the region a child-soldier-free zone and have put in place a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms in the region. To support the moratorium, the United Nations Development Programme has been helping the countries involved to strengthen controls at border posts, to establish arms registers, to build up the capacity of national monitoring commissions and to carry out collections and destructions of illicit arms.

This is just one example of the many steps that are being taken by the United Nations system at the operational level and on the ground. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone and the United Nations peace-building office in Liberia are helping those countries address not only questions of small arms but the full range of post-conflict reconstruction and development tasks. The United Nations is also leading peace-building efforts in Guinea-Bissau. And of course, the economic and social development efforts being carried out by the entire United Nations system — to improve education and health, to create jobs, to promote good governance and respect for human rights — will necessarily have a supportive impact on efforts to demilitarize the societies involved.

Unless adequately addressed, the proliferation of small arms and mercenaries will continue to pose a severe threat to the region's hopes of attaining durable peace and security. Spillover effects from one country to the next have been all too common, underscoring the need for regional cooperation and a comprehensive

approach. The Council's own panels of experts on Sierra Leone and Liberia have reported as much and offered a range of valuable recommendations.

I urge you all to do your utmost to bring the countries of the region to build up the capacity to address this issue. I urge the countries involved, and in particular the leaders, to focus more intently on this very real and very present threat to peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his kind words addressed to me. The first speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Said Djinnit, Interim Commissioner for Peace, Security and Political Affairs of the African Union.

Mr. Djinnit (*spoke in French*): I would first like to present the apologies of Mr. Amara Essy, the Interim Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, who was not able to attend this meeting in New York due to other pressing engagements on the continent. He has entrusted me with representing him in this meeting and with transmitting his greetings to the participants.

Mr. President, I would like to congratulate your country, Guinea, on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March, at this crucial moment in which great stakes are the focus of the entire international community, putting the Security Council to the test.

Finally, I wish to express our appreciation for having kept all the African questions on the Council agenda, despite a strong temptation to marginalize them in favour of more burning current events. Thank you for having kept the world's conscience focused on the critical problems of the African continent.

For many years, the dangerous phenomenon of mercenaries and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons have been the focus of African leaders' concerns. Because they are intrinsically linked to all acts of political destabilization, serious banditry and cross-border crime, these phenomena have compromised all efforts for sustainable development on the continent and have ushered in massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It is worth noting that the massive proliferation of small arms and light weapons has coincided with the emergence of non-State actors that have become key parties in most African conflicts.

West Africa in particular has paid a heavy debt in this crisis, and it is very natural that the leaders of this region have spearheaded the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Lights Weapons, adopted in 1998, and the code of conduct for its implementation, which followed a year later, demonstrates the resolve of West African countries to promote sustainable solutions to conflicts that ravage the region. The other African regions will follow the example of West Africa and the continent will ultimately build on those gains by adopting the Bamako Declaration on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, which was a source of inspiration for the United Nations Plan of Action adopted in July 2001, despite the substantial differences — it must be emphasized — between the two documents, particularly on the terms of transfer of weapons to non-State actors.

Furthermore, this traffic in light weapons fuels cross-border crime and terrorism, which, particularly since 11 September 2001, has been the focus of collective and concerted action by the international community. Africa was also aware of risks and had adopted, in July 1999, a Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. That was later supplemented by a plan of action drafted by a high level intergovernmental meeting in Algiers that brings together the crucial elements of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and the modalities for the implementation of the Convention.

Regarding mercenarism specifically, I wish to point out that the Organization of African Unity articulated a prescriptive response in the form of a Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa, which was adopted in 1977 and entered into force on 22 April 1985. This phenomenon, which held sway in Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, has re-emerged in West Africa as a result of instability, areas of tension and the availability of small arms. In recent years it has been aggravated by the activities of private corporations specializing in providing security services to multinational corporations in high-risk mining areas and to Governments confronted with armed rebellion.

It cannot be denied that the proliferation of light weapons, combined with the activity of mercenaries, constitutes a factor of political and social instability and is an obstacle to the economic development efforts of our States. The essential question is why, despite the

existence of a significant amount of legislation, these scourges continue to persist on our continent.

It is worth noting first that the best conventions and programmes will not be effective as long as sufficient political will does not exist on the part of the signatory States to implement the provisions contained therein.

Over and above political will, States must endow themselves with the necessary mechanisms and means to implement their collective decisions. Thus, a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of weapons can only work if there is a follow-up and monitoring mechanism that is truly independent and has the necessary means that will allow it to identify and cite violators. In addition, there must be a sanctions regime against noncompliant parties, whose principle is envisaged in the charter of the African Union. Efforts under way to set up the African Peer Review Mechanism should help in the implementation of the decisions and commitments of States members of the African Union.

Finally, it must be recalled that while the ready availability of weapons and the use of mercenaries aggravate conflict situations within a State increase the risks of explosion of already fragile inter-State relations and add to war atrocities, the underlying causes of tensions and conflicts that tear our societies apart and poison inter-State relations can be found in most cases in the weakness of the democratic culture, discrimination against minorities, lack of respect for rights and freedoms and the marginalization of entire strata of populations. In other words, the challenge of good governance is at the core of our quest for peace and security in Africa.

Those were the comments I wished to make, and I express my wishes for the full success of this meeting.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Interim Commissioner for Peace, Security and Political Affairs of the African Union for his encouraging words addressed to my country.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is His Excellency Mr. Nana Effah-Apenteng, representative of the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Economic Community of West African States): I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating the sister Republic of Guinea on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

I wish to make a few remarks on behalf of my Minister, the Honourable Hackman Owusu-Agyemang, who is unable to be here. In his absence, he has requested me to bring to the members of the Council greetings from the President of the Republic of Ghana and current Chairman of ECOWAS, His Excellency Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, who has expressed his confidence in this workshop and hopes that it will propose measures that will assist in curbing the menace of the illegal flow of small arms and light weapons, as well as the rising phenomenon of mercenaries and private armies in the West African subregion.

I wish to commend the organizers of this workshop for the appropriateness of the topic, considering the conflict situations in the West African subregion and the very relevant objectives of this workshop.

Although the issue of the proliferation of and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a global problem, we in West Africa have cause to be more concerned about it because of the havoc that the use of these weapons has caused to lives and property in the subregion.

It is sad to observe that, of the 500 million light weapons believed to be in circulation worldwide, as many as 30 million are projected to be in use in Africa, with as many as 8 million in West Africa alone. From the Horn of Africa, via Sudan and straight through Central Africa to Angola, half a continent has suffered from conflicts that influence each other and are facilitated by the proliferation of small arms and the phenomenon of mercenaries. Parts of West Africa, with Liberia, Sierra Leone and, of late, Côte d'Ivoire as examples, are following the same pattern. Over the past decade alone, the use of small and light arms has claimed more than 20 million victims in Africa, many of whom have been civilians, women and children. An estimated 2 million children have been killed, 5 million people have been handicapped, 12 million have been left without shelter and as many as 17 million have been either displaced or rendered refugees. Africa also accounts for approximately 300,000 child soldiers and 10,000 mercenaries, with dire implications for the entire continent — especially for West Africa, with its rising number of conflict situations.

It was in recognition of the enormous scope of this problem that a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa was declared and signed by the heads of State and Government of ECOWAS in October 1998. The Moratorium was intended to serve as a coordinated and sustainable regional approach to controlling the illicit proliferation of small arms in West Africa. It was extended for another three years in October 2001 and is due for renewal again in November 2004.

An action plan adopted in March 1999 by ECOWAS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and a code of conduct adopted in December 1999 by ECOWAS heads of State and Government are both designed to encourage and promote the effective application of the Moratorium through transparent, concerted efforts at both the national and international levels. A Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development was similarly established as the framework for the implementation of measures associated with the Moratorium. ECOWAS member States are also signatories to several other international legal instruments designed to combat the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, as well as the phenomenon of mercenaries in the world.

Recent allegations of cross-border attacks by non-State actors, a spate of organized crime and other transborder criminality in the subregion underscore the timeliness of today's meeting. As we discuss the problems posed by the proliferation of small and light weapons, it is important that we be duly cognizant of the implications of the activities of individual weapons retailers and that we recommend sanctions where they violate the Moratorium and related international legal instruments. We should also examine ways of ensuring the increased participation of civil society groups and of non-governmental organizations in this effort. Furthermore, it may be worth considering whether there are any potential advantages to be derived from revising the Moratorium and making it a permanent instrument.

I cannot conclude my statement without drawing attention to the upsurge in the activities of mercenaries and private armies in conflict situations in West Africa. Like the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, mercenaries and private armies pose grave dangers to the stability of the subregion. The rate at which armed West African civilians are being recruited from one conflict area to another to fight for whoever is ready to engage their services has assumed alarming proportions in recent years.

No single country in the subregion can escape the consequences of the proliferation of weapons and of the increased resort to the use of mercenaries and private armies. Whether supportive or unsupportive of any of the conflicts in the region, each country in West Africa must come to terms with the problems of refugee flows, the militarization of borders and refugee camps, as well as cross-border crimes, including arms trafficking — all of which have dire implications for political stability and socio-economic development. It is only through our concerted efforts and the support of the international community that those problems can be overcome. I trust that this workshop will result in the formulation of appropriate recommendations to unite us in our common fight against the spread of small arms and light weapons and the phenomenon of mercenaries and private armies.

I thank members for their attention. It is my wish that the deliberations of this meeting will be very fruitful.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States.

Mr. Chambas (Economic Community of West African States): On behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of this body of the United Nations at this critical time, when the Security Council is faced with the challenge of taking decisions that will ensure lasting peace and international security. I am confident that, with your wealth of experience, coupled with the famed traditional African wisdom, you will steer the proceedings of the Council in a fair and judicious manner.

I wish to thank the organizers of this consultative meeting, the Security Council and the Republic of Guinea for inviting me to share the concerns and the experiences of ECOWAS in the campaign against the

proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the growing activities of mercenaries and mercenary companies — which others call private military companies — that have deeply affected the political stability of Africa, in particular West Africa.

It is not surprising that a Guinean presidency of the Security Council has decided to include among its peace and security concerns the theme "Proliferation of small arms and light weapons and use of mercenaries: threats to peace and security in West Africa". As I understand, there are at least two reasons for this. First, Guinea is the West African country that has carried the greatest burden of the consequences of internal conflicts of its neighbours, and the issue of refugees is but one aspect of this phenomenon. Secondly, it is this same West African country that suffered a bloody mercenary attack as far back as 1970. Indeed, other West African States were later to suffer a similar fate. Consequently, our subregion became noted for its instability, characterized by the proliferation of small arms and by the phenomenon of mercenaries.

The primary objective of the Economic Community of West African States is to ensure economic integration and development in West Africa. However, the inextricable link between development and peace and stability has meant an increasingly greater role for ECOWAS in conflict management and prevention. In many parts of Africa, the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms — their number is estimated to be as high as 100 million — has posed a major threat to development, to political and economic stability, to civil liberties and to human lives. The growing number, intensity and duration of conflicts in Africa — most particularly in the Great Lakes region and in the Mano River Union basin — are a result of bad governance, economic failure and the easy availability of arms and mercenaries. It is estimated that there are 8 million small arms within West Africa, and scores of mercenary activities continue to take place.

Mercenary activities are deplored the world over and have been consistently condemned by our global Organization. At every opportunity, West African leaders have joined in the condemnation of the use in internal conflicts of foreign soldiers who are available only for hire in internal conflicts. In the 1990s, mercenary activities increased, all of them in contravention of the Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa, adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), later the African Union (AU), and of resolutions of the United Nations that clearly condemn the hire and use of mercenaries in every form.

Strangely enough, in our subregion, a unique type of mercenary is emerging that is not the usual type. Over the past decade, the Mano River Union States have been besieged by rebel activities. The conflicts in Liberia, in Sierra Leone, in Guinea-Bissau to some extent and now, we see, in Côte d'Ivoire have been fought between Government and rebel factions. These rebel factions have been found to be involved in virtually all the conflicts in the Mano River Union States. They have taken on the semblance of mercenaries who have no loyalty to any particular authority and who are always available for hire; but then their motives are sometimes not easily discernible, since they can resort to random plundering and destruction of property, as we now see in the western part of Côte d'Ivoire.

Whatever may be the nature and type of mercenary activity that is confronted, there is a need for global action targeted at eliminating the practice and usefulness of mercenaries. ECOWAS heads of State and Government have committed themselves to ensuring that individual States take all necessary measures to disallow the use of their territories as a base for rebel or mercenary activities.

After the end of the cold war, the West African region, with a population of 250 million people, is indeed saturated with all types of small arms and light weapons. These weapons, which are easy to use due to advancements in technology and easy to move about because of our porous borders, need greater attention from the international community. Small arms, which are defined as weapons of mass destruction by some experts, are aggravating local, communal, national and regional conflicts. All over Africa, small arms proliferation has led to the death of millions of people. In the Sudan, over 2 million have been killed since 1982; in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, another 2 million have also reportedly been killed since 1996. In West Africa, nearly half a million people have died in the last decade from the misuse of small arms, or these "tools of death", as the International Action Network (IANSA) describes them.

As a result of numerous conflicts, death and destruction, West African leaders initiated a "security first" approach to ending conflicts. This led to the

adoption in 1998 of a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons. This is a bold and ambitious step in the management of licit and illicit small arms. The Moratorium is a confidence-building mechanism. Its imposition is a voluntary act backed by the joint political will of our heads of State and Government to deal with small arms proliferation.

The Moratorium requires member States to put in place effective measures to: first, control the import, export and manufacture of light weapons; secondly, register and control the movement and use of legitimate arms stocks; thirdly, detect and destroy all illicit and surplus weapons; and fourthly, permit exemptions to the Moratorium only in accordance with strict criteria.

The Moratorium has led to the establishment of focal points or national commissions in member States for the control of small arms, as recommended by the Code of Conduct, adopted by the heads of State in December 1999, for the implementation of this Moratorium. An important aspect of the Code is article 8, which concerns the establishment of a peacekeeping arms register in all peacekeeping operations within West Africa. Indeed, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through its regional Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), is in the process of establishing with us this register next month in Côte d'Ivoire with the peacekeeping force that has been deployed there. The register is to keep a check on the nature and quantity of small arms used in the ECOWAS mission in Côte d'Ivoire.

The implementation of the ECOWAS Moratorium has been subjected to several evaluation exercises. The last major evaluation of its implementation — its general compliance with and effectiveness in member States — was carried out between September and December 2002.

I must not fail to mention that political will for the continuation of the Moratorium has never wavered, as member States of ECOWAS renewed it in October 2001 for another three years. There is yet again a strong indication that the Moratorium will eventually become a permanent strategy for the control of the movement of small arms within our subregion.

May I also use this opportunity to remind members of Security Council resolution 1209 (1998), which commended ECOWAS on the adoption of the Moratorium. The UNDP, as I have indicated, has supported ECOWAS, through PCASED, in backstopping the Moratorium since March 1999. We seize this opportunity to thank the United Nations and the Governments of the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Sweden, Canada, Norway, Switzerland and the Netherlands for the technical and financial support extended for the implementation of the Moratorium.

ECOWAS remains engaged with the international community over the twin devils of our time, small arms and mercenary activities. We call upon the international community to implement the letter and spirit of the United Nations Programme of Action and provide necessary resources to enable the ECOWAS secretariat to implement the ECOWAS Moratorium in all its ramifications.

Our community is committed towards ensuring widespread peace and security in the subregion. To this end, the ECOWAS heads of State, at their meeting in January this year, recognizing the gravity of the proliferation of small arms, its linkage to the continuing instability across our subregion and the activities of mercenaries and cross-border crimes, recommended the establishment of a small arms unit within the ECOWAS secretariat to strengthen our capacity to reduce, manage and eliminate small arms and to enhance human security as a means of facilitating the harmonious development of our countries.

I am appealing to the Security Council and the international community at large to support effective implementation of the Moratorium and to facilitate the establishment of a well-resourced small arms unit of the ECOWAS secretariat.

I look forward to fruitful and interactive discussions at this forum and once again wish you a successful tenure as President of the United Nations Security Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is Mr. Ibrahima Sall, the Regional Director of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED).

Mr. Sall (*spoke in French*): First of all, on behalf of Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, UNDP Director of the African Bureau, who is present here, I would like to congratulate Guinea on its presidency of the Council and to thank it for the very important initiative it is taking at this extremely important time, when the subject of weapons of mass destruction holds the attention of the international community.

We are going to give the Council a Power-Point presentation on the projection screen in this Chamber, and we will try to remain within the given time limits, bearing in mind the fact that later discussions will make it possible to go into further detail for those who wish so.

The point of our statement is to demonstrate UNDP's role in the fight against the proliferation of weapons in West Africa through PCASED. First, we would like to give Council members an idea of the range of proliferation of arms in West Africa, and then show how the Programme has been set up as a response to arms proliferation, before looking at measures on how to combat this proliferation in West Africa.

The situation of arms proliferation in West Africa today is extremely worrying, which has made this subregion one of the least stable in the world — first of all, because of the number and impact of coups d'état — 72 coups d'état took place between 1972 and 1980, of which 50 per cent were successful — with very typical examples. There is one country, for instance, where there were five attempted coups d'état in four years, with one of them alone creating approximately 250,000 refugees. Also, as we have stressed, there has been mercenary activity, a gearing down of trouble-spots that destabilize the subregion, 12 years of war in Liberia, 10 years in Sierra Leone, a revolt in Casamance which lasted for 20 years, and so forth.

Hence, the situation is explosive. There are more than 10 million arms in West Africa and, according to the most recent estimate, between 90 and 100 million persons are enduring this situation in the rest of Africa. Furthermore, 50 per cent of these weapons are used by organized criminal groups, and 80 per cent of the victims are the most impoverished — women, children and the elderly.

A very dark picture has emerged in the course of about 10 years: 2 million children have been killed; 5 million persons have been handicapped; 12 million children have been made homeless; 300,000 children have acted as combatants and over 10,000 mercenaries have emerged. All this points to the intensity, irreversibility and frequency of armed conflicts. Those conflicts have both direct and indirect effects on human security. It is in that context, therefore, that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) justified the rationality of the Programme in its 2002 mission statement.

I have not mentioned the specific situation in Nigeria, where, although there is no domestic rebellion there is nevertheless a great deal of insecurity. That insecurity could result in attacks on the civilian population, which will be the subject of the following images.

An image was projected on screen.

This is an image of the results of an attack with a Kalashnikov rifle, which is a weapon of war. That attack took place at a location where we had gone to establish a national commission to combat the proliferation of weapons. We came across this incident involving a vehicle being used to transfer funds that was attacked by Kalashnikov or AK-40 fire. It is pretty cheap to buy a Kalashnikov: one can find such a weapon on the market today for $30. The toll in this case was certainly terrible: a bullet in the abdomen, a lost eye and another bullet in the head. This level of insecurity is the daily fare in the region. It is therefore important to ask what the response of the Programme has been.

First of all, the response of the Programme set up by UNDP is based on the concept of human security. It involves extending the concept of human security not only to people and goods but also to economic and social rights. The link between development and security, as well as the security paradigm itself, are also part of that response.

Another element that I believe is important has to do with the fact that the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development is a typical example of a comprehensive response to a problem that has itself become global in nature. A range of actors is involved in this effort. International organizations, States, national organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGO), media and civil society groups are all participants in a system of partnership and coalition that is attempting to take ownership of the Programme through the national

commissions established by States and the national and transnational bodies of civil society. Having been given a formal platform, those bodies have been actively participating in the Moratorium since the latest summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Multidimensional and multidisciplinary strategies are being put in place to deal with certain elements relating to legislative reform. They also exist because we are somewhat ahead of the game in West Africa with regard to the issue of combating the proliferation of arms. We have succeeded in establishing norms and in putting in place a programme of action. We are now attempting to link standards and behaviour though an incentive system. To that end, we are today relying on diplomacy and capacity-building. It should be remembered, however, that we do not yet have the power to impose sanctions or carry out public negotiations.

An image was projected on screen.

This next image is of a young man from Sierra Leone who stepped on a mine. We used this image in our campaign during the Africa Cup to illustrate how people's dreams are also shattered.

Our response has therefore been comprehensive. But above all it has been an interesting response in that for the first time in the fight against the proliferation of arms, we have both a political delegation comprised of ECOWAS States and the political legitimacy necessary for the Programme to be able to be involved on a country by country basis and to make direct contact with ministers for foreign affairs, defence and security to discuss the issues at hand. This state of affairs indeed makes for the effectiveness and level of specificity that are among the strengths of the Programme.

Lastly, with regard to comprehensiveness, the most important thing about the Programme established by UNDP in Africa is that it involves a programme for practical disarmament that goes beyond lofty principles. Through the UNDP Programme we have today been able to respond to the issue of how to resolve the problem of proliferation on the ground. Our mission is to promote the culture of peace, train security forces, establish border controls, create a regional register of light weapons, harmonize laws, collect and destroy weapons, extend the spirit of moratorium to the rest of the African continent, mobilize resources and begin a dialogue with arms manufacturers.

The most important thing today is to establish what we refer to as national commissions to combat the proliferation of weapons. This is a matter of establishing such commissions in all ECOWAS States. Created by States themselves, which would also determine their composition, such commissions would serve as the implementing agents in combating the proliferation of weapons. They would also be responsible for ensuring the durability of the effort and for strengthening the capacity of States in the area of combating proliferation.

Up until 2001 there were only five national commissions. Thanks to intense work done by a team in the field, 13 out of a potential 15 national commissions have been established in a single year. Thirteen out of the 15 countries in the West Africa region therefore have national commissions to combat proliferation. Due to the current instability in the country, Côte d'Ivoire is one of the States without a commission. We hope that, with the support of the Executive Secretary, we will be able to benefit from the establishment of the new Government to set up a national commission, set up a register in any future peacekeeping operation and move towards destroying surplus arms. Liberia is the other exception. That situation is due to the civil war in the country. However, it has demonstrated a firm commitment to establish a national commission. Moreover — and this is the second point I wish to make in this regard — once established, national commissions become part of a network that exists for the purposes of sharing best practices, cooperating to combat the proliferation of weapons and exchanging information.

Decentralization has now been instituted. For example, Mali's commission is so far ahead that it has already created local commissions to combat proliferation in the north, east and west of the country.

The Programme must now complete that network by incorporating Nigeria. What is most important, however, is that we move from the state of institutional integration that has always existed between the Programme and UNDP resident representatives to an operational integration that includes in national commissions those responsible for good-governance programmes. From an operational standpoint, that

would serve to integrate the United Nations system into anti-proliferation efforts.

Strengthening border controls is also part of our Programme. Just a few days ago, we provided Mali with over $200,000 to secure its borders with Mauritania and Algeria. We are now in the process of helping Benin, and are considering extending assistance to Ghana and Niger.

We are also involved in training security forces. We have trained trainers, namely, over 300 senior officers throughout the 15 participating countries. With the national decentralization now in place, and using our own training manual, over 7,500 agents will be trained in advance of the unit-level decentralization of security and armed forces.

With regard to actual figures, we have destroyed 38,000 weapons in West Africa. The Council will note that, as we have already stated, we have, paradoxically, destroyed the most weapons in Liberia. In addition, as they exit the Chamber, members will find a film on the destruction of weapons in Liberia, which has been an extremely significant event.

In tandem with that, we are paying particular attention to the subject of light weapons that includes anti-personnel mines, as they too fall within this category. We have a zero-mines initiative in place in West Africa. With Canada's help, we intend to destroy all Government landmine stocks. We will also follow that with demining programmes, to begin a year after the destruction of those weapons.

Three projects are currently under way. The first entails promoting the culture of peace. In that regard, it is important to point out that we intend to reform primary, secondary and university curricula in West Africa in order to include the teaching of the culture of peace. Another project involves harmonizing security-related legislation into a single law through an international convention, as we have done in the area of business law. The third, and last, programme involves establishing a regional register of light weapons. As the Council is aware, a regional register of conventional arms was established following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/36 L. However, after three years of work by a group of experts, it has not been possible to include light weapons in the Register of Conventional Arms. Light weapons will therefore be included in regional registers. ECOWAS will be working on this issue through the establishment of pilot projects on a country-by-country basis. Several countries have already volunteered to provide comprehensive information on their stocks of small arms and ammunition, which will make it possible for us to go to the source in order to coordinate our efforts to come up with genuinely national registers.

I now wish to refer to the future of the Programme. First, we will seek to integrate the Programme into the framework of international efforts, beginning with the United Nations Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Their Aspects. We will then seek to associate ourselves with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). If memory serves me, I believe that France has been entrusted with the peace and security portfolio, and that it is in the process of working on that matter. That is how we plan to involve ourselves in new international efforts.

We also hope to expand and improve our partnership with implementing bodies, the agencies of the United Nations and donors in particular. In that regard, I believe that it is very important that we have put in place a mechanism at the level of regional programmes that makes it possible for all the Ambassadors of donor countries to meet their counterparts from recipient countries in order to be able to discuss all aspects of the Programme in total transparency.

Another important point is integrating the UNDP resident representatives and, further, those responsible for the good governance within the framework of the struggle against the proliferation of arms.

But the most important aspect of efforts to combat proliferation, as the Executive Secretary said, is not only political commitment and will, but also the mobilization of resources. It must be understood that our Programme started with a 60 per cent deficit in resources. Of the estimated $13 million needed to carry out the Plan of Action, we were able to mobilize only $5 million.

I would like to give a very simple example. Today, the minimal programme — and I stress minimal — to strengthen borders of the 15 West African countries, which would mean four sites per country, would call for $6 million. But since PCASED was established in 1998, we have not been able to

mobilize this sum. So this gives you some idea of our shortfalls and deficit problems.

The last operational perspective is the matter of reducing demand through the Moratorium and through stricter monitoring and assessment regimes. I believe the Interim Commissioner for Peace, Security and Political Affairs has clearly stressed that. We need a far more restrictive regime for countries that have adopted the Moratorium. At the same time, on the supply side, the proposal that the export of weapons to conflict-torn regions be avoided is important, but that implies that declarations be made.

Today, the customs statistics collected by the United Nations are not sufficient, partly because military arms are not declared, arms are in transit, and free-trade areas are proliferating, and all this means that important data are not available to us. Therefore, we have to rely on voluntary reporting by States. It should be noted that even now, among the more than 100 exporting countries, only 29 submit reports, and they do not always provide data that are relevant to our efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons.

Therefore, we will also step up the campaigns for demobilization and micro-disarmament operations, and especially for public awareness, as we have been able to do in Chad concerning human development, saying it is a race to be won. Another image that we would like to put forward is that of tolerance and of all of us coming together in national unity. Lastly, there is the image of the flame of peace. Let us act before it dies out.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Regional Director of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) in Africa for his kind words addressed to my country.

Following this important and interesting statement by the Director of PCASED, I would like to remind the Council that our meeting today is a workshop and, as such, it is interactive. The groups of speakers, if they wish, will be able to ask questions. Since we have the opportunity of having with us this morning the leadership of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and PCASED, they would certainly be glad to answer any questions that might be raised.

The next speaker is Mr. Baboucarr-Blaise Ismaila Jagne, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Gambia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. My delegation is indeed proud that it has fallen on none other than the Republic of Guinea, a sisterly neighbour of ours in the West African subregion, to preside over the affairs of the Security Council at this time — a time that might well prove to be the defining moment in the future of the United Nations. I have no doubt that, as always, you will discharge your responsibility with objectivity, fairness and sagacity.

Let me also pay homage to your predecessor, Minister Joschka Fischer of Germany, and his able colleague, Ambassador Gunter Pleuger, for a job well done during the month of February.

My delegation is indeed grateful to you for organizing this ministerial workshop on the proliferation of small arms, light weapons and the phenomenon of mercenaries: threats to peace and security in West Africa. This is a subject that is of great concern to us all in West Africa, not least to President Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh and the Government of the Gambia. We have been drawing attention to this West African problem for several years now, because the accumulation of small arms and light weapons is obviously an important contributing factor to the unending conflicts that have plagued much of West Africa and stymied development on the continent. The fact is that, for the most part, the methods through which these weapons are acquired are illicit, as are the purposes for which they are acquired. Currently, it is reported that there are an estimated 8 million illicit small arms in circulation within and across our porous borders in West Africa.

Within the last decade, the problem of small arms and light weapons has led to the convening of a number of summit meetings on the issue, culminating in 1998 in the adoption of a declaration of a three-year renewable Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Moratorium on small arms, the first of its kind in Africa. In addition to the moratorium, ECOWAS heads of State also adopted a plan of action and a code of conduct and made a decision that each country would establish a national commission to

oversee implementation. Together, all these instruments would facilitate enforcement of the Moratorium.

In addition to that, as a support and monitoring mechanism, the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), in close cooperation with the ECOWAS secretariat and the various national commissions, provides assistance with national initiatives to align existing laws and administrative procedures with the requirements of the Moratorium. It maintains a register of weapons being used by peacekeeping troops in the subregion; processes requests for exemptions and importation by Governments of arms, ammunitions and components; provides training in arms control; and promotes cooperation with manufacturers and suppliers on the implementation of the Moratorium.

Thus it can be seen that commendable efforts are being made by West African Governments to address the problem. Besides, the far-reaching decision taken by our leaders to extend the Moratorium for a second three-year period is indeed a clear demonstration of political will to deal seriously with this problem.

Of equal concern is the character of the end users of these arms and weapons. It is a well-known fact that it is militias that drive conflicts in Africa. Some time back, it came to light that these militias depended to a significant extent on child soldiers. That realization shocked the world into action, and the international community responded with the appropriate measures to confront this issue. But over and above this repugnant reality, what has also been emerging in bold relief has been the fact that the backbone of these militias is made up largely of mercenaries. This phenomenon has not yet received the attention it truly deserves.

In the past, mercenary activities in Africa were associated with European adventurers and "dogs of war". Increasingly, however, Africa is becoming quite adept in producing its own rich crop of these soldiers of fortune. The West African subregion in particular is riddled with war and conflict situations that are driven by mercenary-dominated militias.

The conflicts of the Mano River Union, for example, were sustained through the use of mercenaries by the various warlords. It is now well known that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone was made up of combatants from virtually every country in West Africa, who were engaged on contract terms to fight for pay and profit for the sole purpose of overthrowing the legitimate Government of Sierra Leone. It is also a fact that these elements were involved in the invasion of Guinea and in the present imbroglio in Liberia, not to mention the atrocities that they perpetrated during those difficult times. There are more than strong indications that in the latest conflict situation in West Africa, in Côte d'Ivoire, the spillover of mercenaries from the Mano River Union conflicts is an important additional complicating element.

Mercenaries are totally lacking in conscience and morality. Their only loyalty and allegiance is to themselves, and they will respond only to the highest bidder. There are known cases of mercenaries who have fought with several different militias, some of whom were mortal enemies. They are there, ready to fight anyone's war, so long as the price is right.

It is certain that for as long as these unsavoury elements exist in our midst, the demand for small arms and light weapons will be there — as will the financiers and lords of war. They constitute a critical link in the chain of conflict. And unless that link is broken, we in West Africa will know no peace or rest.

It will be recalled that in July 2001, the United Nations convened the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, at which it decided to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Conference affirmed that "Governments bear the primary responsibility for preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects" and that "the international community has a duty to deal with this issue" (*A/CONF.192/15, preambular paragraphs 13 and 15*). I believe that the same holds true for the problem of mercenaries.

It is true that in the West African subregion Governments have started to assume their responsibilities vis-à-vis the control of small arms and light weapons. What they have achieved, commendable as it may be, is only a beginning. Much more needs to be done.

In December 2002, at the end of the third year of the Moratorium, an evaluation was undertaken. Some of its findings and observations are instructive. Let me highlight a few.

> "Unless the world's major arms producers take more responsibility for managing the world market in arms, the most vulnerable States will continue to suffer from the uncontrolled trade in small arms ... A renewed momentum needs to be built around the issue of dialogue with arms suppliers and producers.
>
> "While the (numerous) applications for waivers (for imports of arms and ammunitions) indicate that member States do respect the Moratorium, there have been allegations that not all States are complying with the Code of Conduct ... ECOWAS member States may therefore wish to review the Code of Conduct in order to provide (a) enforcement measures ... when countries are found to be in violation of their obligations, and (b) initiation of investigation of serious breaches of the Code of Conduct."
>
> Regarding import exemptions,
>
> "there is a gray area in the exemption procedure: there is currently no clause requiring that arms dealers" (as opposed to State parties) "submit an application to the ECOWAS Secretariat ... There is yet another gray area in the exemption process: countries which have been granted waivers do not have to show them when purchasing weapons."

Against this backdrop, I should like us to consider a few proposals as to what more could be done, over and above the efforts made so far, to address the problem of small arms, light weapons and mercenaries in West Africa. It goes without saying that a priori, each West African country must show stronger commitment towards the objectives of the sub-regional and international initiatives on this issue and a greater willingness to enforce the agreements made collectively.

First, an international legislative instrument is needed to hold both supplier and user of small arms and light weapons to greater account. Manufacturers and suppliers must be made to show more responsible behaviour in the transfer of these arms and weapons to non-State actors. A mechanism must be put in place to ensure that transfers are made only to legitimate State end-users. The efforts under way to regulate arms supplies to militias in certain countries in the region should be modified for application throughout West Africa. In addition to that, something akin to the monitoring and regulation of the movement of blood diamonds should be designed to control the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Of course, these would have to be backed up by an appropriate sanctions regime. In this regard, much stronger cooperation must be sought from the arms manufacturers and suppliers, signatories of the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Control for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies.

Secondly, actions should be taken to check the activities of illicit arms brokers, dealers and retailers in much the same way as measures have been taken against illicit drug dealers. The situation in West Africa today is such that it is easy for individuals or groups of individuals to purchase any amount of arms and weapons, sometimes fairly openly. Effective measures must be put in place to stop this.

Thirdly, we need to promulgate an international convention proscribing the activities and use of mercenaries in the subregion. Warlords who recruit mercenaries to carry out any kind of war, whether justifiable or not, should be held to account. The appropriate surveillance and enforcement mechanisms should then be put in place.

Fourthly, as an immediate measure to respond to the urgency of the situation in West Africa, steps should be taken to demobilize mercenaries and have them reinserted into productive and gainful economic activities in their countries of origin. Sierra Leone recently had a successful programme, supported by the United Nations, for the demobilization, reintegration and reinsertion of tens of thousands of its nationals. A subregional version of such a programme is what is being proposed now.

Fifthly, some legislative instrument is needed to prevent the provision of safe havens, rear bases, logistics, supplies, etc., to mercenaries and other users of illicit small arms and light weapons. The appropriate regime of sanctions on defaulters would also need to be worked out.

Finally, to have any or all of the foregoing enforced, we would need a much stronger partnership between the United Nations, PCASED and ECOWAS. At present, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Secretariat's Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Department of

Peacekeeping Operations and Department for Disarmament Affairs, and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research provide various forms of assistance and support to the work of PCASED. What is now required is for that cooperation to be broadened to include concerted actions on the question of mercenaries, as well as a more formal arrangement through which the Security Council, in close cooperation with ECOWAS and PCASED, would establish a mechanism for monitoring the situation, receiving reports on it and enforcing its decisions on matters of small arms, light weapons and mercenaries. Perhaps the United Nations Office for Conflict Prevention and Peace-building for West Africa should assume the role of coordinator of this arrangement, and liaison between the Security Council and ECOWAS.

My delegation fervently hopes that this workshop will not be a one-day wonder. It is our expectation that from our deliberations will emerge the pointers that will lead to stronger collaboration between all the major players in West Africa on one hand, and the Security Council on the other, in a bid to confront our subregion's biggest challenge, namely, the problem of mercenaries and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Gambia for his kind words and encouragement addressed to Guinea.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, His Excellency Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda.

Mr. Miranda (Angola) *(spoke in French)*: I would first like to congratulate Guinea for the initiative it has taken to convene this special meeting that allows us to analyse and seek effective solutions to problems which have gravely affected the stability of certain regions of the African continent and that have thus contributed to the economic backwardness of those regions.

I would also like to welcome the presence of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and those holding other portfolios from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and the High Representative of Amara Essy, who is Interim President of the Commission of the African Union.

The problem of the proliferation of light arms, mercenary activities and threats to peace and security in West Africa have become a real danger, and they concern us. They are also directly related to the prolongation of conflicts and of the climate of tension that reigns in some countries in this region. The number of deaths and wounded is growing daily because of the use of small arms. The causes of this problem are many, and they vary from one region to another. The inappropriate use of light arms in some countries creates difficulties that harm the well-being and safety of citizens and, in other countries, even threaten the existence of the State.

In countries that have concluded peace agreements, this factor creates impediments and undermines the prevailing trust among the protagonists of the peace process, while it blocks peacekeeping operations, efforts at reconstruction and development in countries in the post-conflict phase, and the normal development of national democratic processes.

Given the current serious threat to peace and security, and given the risk that it will spread to other regions in Africa, the problem that is striking West Africa is of such a scope that the solution cannot rest solely with the countries or group of countries directly affected. A more substantial commitment on the part of the United Nations, and of the Security Council in particular, is vital — thus the merit and importance of today's meeting.

The growing concentration of light weapons in different regions around the globe and the possession and use of these weapons by civilian groups or subversive armed organizations can be traced mainly to the ineffectiveness of systems for controlling arms imports and exports, faulty oversight of military arsenals, and the illicit trafficking in arms, sometimes carried out with the connivance of Governments producing weapons.

As well, some countries selling arms have not demonstrated sufficient restraint in exporting to regions already destroyed by conflict. They have incited belligerent groups to pursue subversive and destabilizing wars.

The arms embargoes imposed by the Council in order to control the proliferation of weapons have not been fully respected. They have led to a transformation of numerous regions, mostly African, into veritable arms bazaars and sources of new conflicts.

The limited success of embargoes on arms for Africa is due to the poor results achieved by a number of States in controlling their borders, linked to a lack of political will and to interference in the internal affairs of other States. The experience of the Angolan conflict has demonstrated that the importation of weapons that were subsequently delivered to armed groups was a fact in certain African countries that were using lawful procedures. That situation continues to be true in the case of other States engaged in conflicts.

We must therefore urgently speed up the fine-tuning of an international mechanism enabling States to identify and to trace the flows of small arms and light weapons, including those arms of legal provenance. We must create a mechanism that easily identifies any individual or enterprise involved in the illicit traffic of arms so that they can be severely punished.

Arms trafficking in Western Africa is not inevitable. It can be eliminated. One appropriate way is the implementation by all States of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in July 2001. Southern Africa, to which my country belongs, has already taken steps in that direction by adopting the protocol of the Southern Africa Development Community on firearms and munitions.

We should take note of the public denunciation of States and individuals that have been shown to be deliberately involved in the violation of arms embargoes, as well as of the sanctions imposed on them. That procedure has proven to be very effective in significantly reducing violations of the embargoes imposed by the United Nations during the period of conflict in my country.

The United Nations must therefore play an essential role on the question of the proliferation of arms. To that end, it must provide assistance to help Western Africa carry out programmes for disarmament, demobilization and social reintegration. The United Nations must also promote all measures to seize and destroy weapons arsenals in the framework of peace accords. That very important measure will prevent those who intend to persist in the choice of war from gaining access to arms. My country's experience in that area has been very positive.

Angolan legislation stipulates that the use and carriage of firearms are strictly prohibited. We are fine-tuning a compensation process based on the principle of voluntary action, which comprises three phases. The first phase is essentially administrative in nature and consists of establishing structures for the registering and reception of surrendered arms. The primary objective of the second phase is to raise the awareness of the public. It is aimed at the overall society and should take into account the results of investigations and of actions for the collection of large quantities of small firearms. We envisage compensation for informers. The third phase will begin immediately after the end of the time period established for the voluntary return of small firearms. Only at the end of the three phases will we introduce new legislation to modify the provisions on prohibition under the law on the use and possession of firearms by civilians.

We also consider fundamental United Nations support for the Moratorium declared in 1998 by the Economic Community of West African States on the importation and exportation and manufacture of small arms in all their aspects, which enables the States of the region to contribute to the creation of a culture of peace, which should lead to the gradual elimination of their conflicts.

Also, it must be underlined that some countries in the region — countries that are already well known — must halt their military, political and diplomatic and material assistance to armed groups active in other States. The Governments of countries in conflict must, in turn, demonstrate political will by taking concrete measures towards greater flexibility as a prior condition necessary for a climate favourable to the peaceful negotiation of conflicts.

We believe that the important conclusions established as the outcome of this meeting will signal the commitment of the States members of the Security Council and of the Economic Community of West African States to cooperate effectively in order to lessen as much as possible the climate of tension prevailing in Western Africa and to eradicate in the short term the currently prevailing instability.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola for his kind words addressed to my country.

I now give the floor to His Excellency François-Xavier Ngoubeyou, Minister of State for External Relations of Cameroon.

Mr. Ngoubeyou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): It is a genuine pleasure to see you, Sir, presiding over our work today. My country is proud of the spirit with which your country, Guinea, is guiding the Council's work in the particularly sensitive international environment of March 2003 that is known to us all. Also allow me to congratulate the Council through you, Sir, for taking this initiative.

Holding a public debate on the question of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and mercenary activities: threats to peace and security in West Africa should be placed within a larger context that began in the decade of the 1990s. In its debate on disarmament and micro-disarmament, the international community has given top priority to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and related phenomenon.

This awareness of the danger represented by portable arms led to the holding here in New York in July 2001 of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Lights Weapons in All Its Aspects. During that Conference, we all noted that the manufacture, transfer and illicit circulation of those weapons, as well as their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled proliferation, in numerous regions of the world, particularly in West Africa, constituted a grave threat to peace, security, stability, reconciliation and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels.

At the end of that meeting, we jointly adopted a plan of action to establish concrete measures at the national, regional and international levels to prevent, control and eliminate the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

I felt compelled to make this digression to emphasize that this debate should not be considered a spontaneous occurrence, an act without precedence, but rather a significant moment, one stage of a dynamic, future-oriented and standard-setting process that has long been under way. We believe that this meeting is yet another opportunity for us to place particular emphasis on this issue and to reaffirm the role of the United Nations in collecting, classifying, sharing and disseminating information on illicit traffic in light weapons. In that context, the Council should take the necessary measures to provide assistance to States and subregional organizations, particularly African ones, to ensure that all African countries will rise to the same level of political awareness as nations of other regions in the area of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Furthermore, by insisting on the elaboration of an international instrument against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, in accordance with the above-mentioned plan of action, I would like once again to highlight that that is a strong recommendation, the immediate and effective implementation of which will undoubtedly constitute a decisive phase in our struggle against this scourge.

Last October, under the presidency of Cameroon, the Council had organized a day of discussion devoted to the issue of small arms. On that occasion, several delegations recognized that the Security Council should play a greater role to ensure better control of the circulation of light weapons by establishing a permanent monitoring mechanism to follow up on embargoes and other sanctions regarding those weapons. Organizing the collection of light weapons and setting up small economic projects for groups and communities concerned could also be very useful if the international community were to support them.

There is also a need to strengthen legislation at the national level with regard to firearms and the prohibition and use of firearms by security companies that are now proliferating in our countries. Robust measures need to be taken against the home manufacture of firearms. What worries us today is the linkage between trade and other prohibited phenomena such as terrorism, organized crime, drug traffic, large-scale banditry in our cities and road blocks that are set up in some regions. More comprehensively, I wish to emphasize the need at the national, and possibly the subregional level, to adopt measures aimed at preventing conflict, because we know that disputes leading to civil wars or to similar situations are important factors in the proliferation and illicit circulation of light weapons.

Despite the entry into force in 2001 of the United Nations convention on this matter, the use of mercenaries is one of the major concerns of most African States and of other areas of the globe. At the behest of local powers, mercenaries continue to fuel conflict in Africa, contributing to the pillage of natural resources and the destabilization of power in the area. There are flagrant human rights violations, particularly of the right of peoples to self-determination. In that regard, we believe that our priorities for action should

emphasize a redefinition of mercenary activity, a study on how mercenaries are used in terrorist attacks and how to strengthen the roles of the United Nations and the Security Council in the fight against the phenomenon of mercenarism.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Minister of State for External Relations of Cameroon for his kind words addressed to my country and to myself.

This was the last speaker in the first round. We have not noted any questions. Therefore, we will go straight to the next round. The first speaker on my list is Mr. Monie Captan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Captan (Liberia): Let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. Liberia expresses its appreciation for your foresight in confronting this body with the critical issues of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the phenomenon of mercenaries — threats to peace and security in West Africa.

The problem of the proliferation of small arms in West Africa has claimed the attention of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for some time now, and as a result of the seriousness attached to this problem, the Community adopted a protocol establishing a Moratorium on the importation of small arms into West Africa. This initiative was spearheaded by Mali and was supported by many international partners, in particular the United Nations. The success of this initiative relies heavily on the cooperation of arms-producing States, as arms continue to enter the subregion and conflicts continue to persist.

The problem of mercenaries has also claimed the attention of ECOWAS. A proposal by Liberia at the meeting of Foreign Ministers of ECOWAS in December 2002 in Dakar was adopted. Under its provisions, ECOWAS would convene a special meeting on the subject to explore ways and means to address this problem. The proliferation of mercenaries in West Africa was in part induced as a result of the unsuccessful reintegration programmes for ex-combatants that failed because the international community did not provide adequate resources for these programmes. This resulted in a large population of idle ex-combatants in an economically stagnant region where ex-combatants' only means of earning a living was to sell their skills as armed fighters for money and loot.

The proliferation of arms and mercenaries are linked in that mercenaries can only operate where there are continuous military supplies. In many instances, mercenaries join rebel movements and are ensured military supplies by State actors who use non-State actors as proxies in regional conflicts. The proliferation of mercenaries is of particular concern because mercenaries in West Africa are more often ex-combatants from regional conflicts who are recycled into conflicts and sustain conflict and instability in the region. Mercenaries survive in environments where non-State actors are actively engaged in armed conflicts. We have witnessed this situation in Liberia, Sierra Leone and now Côte d'Ivoire. A case in point is the ongoing war in Liberia, where the rebels of the Liberians United Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), fighting to overthrow the democratically elected Government of Liberia, comprise ex-combatants from the defunct warring factions in Liberia, the Sierra Leonean Kamajors and Guinean nationals. This rebel group of mixed nationals is now engaged in fighting on all sides of the Ivorian conflict.

In addressing the proliferation of arms and mercenaries, the international community must focus on the source of the arms supply to these non-State actors. Failure to do so will lead to the maintenance of a large number of mercenaries in West Africa who could surface in any part of West Africa and beyond, causing further instability and creating a major humanitarian crisis, resulting in an increase in already-alarming levels of refugees and internally displaced persons within the subregion.

The recent arrest and disarming by French forces in Côte d'Ivoire of more than 100 Liberian mercenaries fighting for the Ivorian Government is an indication of the seriousness of this problem. Those Liberians are a part of the rebel group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), which went to fight for the Ivorian Government in order to gain access to and open a second front in eastern Liberia, along the Liberian-Ivorian border. A second front was established with an incursion into Toe Town, Grand Gedeh County, from Côte d'Ivoire by Liberian mercenaries. Such a development has the potential to create a new security crisis between the two neighbouring States.

In another recent development, the Government of Ghana raided a Liberian refugee camp in Ghana, where a recruitment centre and a military training camp were discovered. Ex-combatants seek refuge and safety in refugee camps, where they actively carry out recruitment.

For the past three years, the Liberian Government has been engaged in a war to defend its territorial integrity against armed aggression by LURD and its mercenaries from neighbouring countries. ECOWAS, in its attempt to curtail such illegal activities, imposed a sanctions regime on LURD. However, this pressure on the part of ECOWAS has not received much support from the international community, which has done little to show its disapproval for this armed insurgency.

The Security Council mandated a panel of experts to investigate the flow of arms supplies to rebel groups — LURD — in Liberia, in violation of the arms embargo. The panel reported to the Council that the rebels had direct links to the President of neighbouring Guinea and that materiel was reaching the rebels from the territory of Guinea. The panel then recommended that the Council expand its arms embargo on Liberia to the other two members of the Mano River Union. That crucial recommendation was selectively ignored by the Council.

Today, LURD rebels continue to wage war against the Liberian people with a robust and sustained supply of materiel. Last month, the Government of Liberia presented a formal complaint to the Security Council — in keeping with Article 35, paragraph 1 of the Charter of the United Nations — in which Guinea's involvement in fuelling the war in Liberia was documented. These Guinean-backed rebels have now surfaced in Côte d'Ivoire and have recently taken control of Liberian territory adjacent to Sierra Leone along the western border of Liberia.

Sustainable peace in West Africa will require an end to such support for rebel movements and their mercenaries. Sustainable peace will also require the provision of adequate resources for the reconstruction of economic infrastructure in West Africa and for the reintegration of ex-combatants, the resettlement of internally displaced persons, the repatriation of refugees, job creation and the promotion of an enabling environment for good governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights and democracy.

When the objective of regime change is promoted through the expediency of violence and the use of force, acceptance of the consequences of the proliferation of small arms and the use of mercenaries becomes an integral aspect of international attitudes. Such attitudes then become the source of immeasurable human suffering and of a degradation of the humanity of hundreds of thousands of West Africans, with an accompanying charade of humanitarian responses. A change in international attitudes will go a long way towards bringing an end to human suffering, especially with regard to political expediency and moral justification for the use of violence.

Today, those subjects are at the core of the fact of underdevelopment in our region — especially in the Mano River subregion, where poverty is so entrenched and has a dehumanizing effect on its peoples. The tragedy is even more profound in view of the fact that the subregion and the region as a whole are rich in resources. Poverty, hunger and disease are endemic to our people, while our resources assuage the greed of countries and of people who already have much.

Through the expropriation of our resources, we are supplied with swords and instruments created for our self-immolation. The region has become a Petri dish for those who manufacture small arms and light weapons in an experiment on how to degrade nations and people. The best and most conducive conditions for the creation of mercenaries are an absence of good schools, continuous cultural disruptions, economic deprivation and a lack of economic empowerment. Young men between the ages of 12 and 19 who are deprived of the basic sustenance of family life and of the hope of surviving beyond the age of 28 are apt to embrace mercenarism as a way of life, and many countries are prepared to provide them with the implements of their trade.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Guinean presidency of the Security Council for organizing this open debate on two key issues in the complex scenario of threats to international peace and security in West Africa, and we congratulate the presidency on this initiative, which is very timely.

We welcome the broad participation that this debate has attracted, with regard to both the States present and the regional and subregional organizations represented by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We

believe that the issue's regional dimension is essential and that only through joining measures at the national level with regional initiatives will we be able to consistently and comprehensively confront the threat to peace and security that the millions of small arms and light weapons circulating in West Africa represent.

My delegation would like to appeal to all West African countries and to their regional organizations to implement the measures contained in the action plan that resulted from the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in New York in July 2002. For the sake of brevity, and given the impossibility of dealing with every facet of this debate, I should like to make several comments and to pose several questions on the following points.

First of all, I should like to stress the importance of including concrete measures concerning the elimination of small arms and light weapons in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for ex-combatants. That component is sometimes not included in peace agreements and, when it is, its implementation in practice is slow and problematic. In our judgement, the delays in this type of programme have very negative consequences in the post-conflict phase. I should like to know the opinions of the West African States present in this Chamber that are implementing this type of programme with regard to what lessons they have learned in that respect.

Secondly, I should like to express my concern about the urgent issue of child soldiers in West Africa. We attach great importance to the reintegration of child soldiers — especially to the educational aspect of their reintegration. I should like to ask the States that are present what their activities are in that respect.

My last point concerns the ECOWAS Moratorium. In its implementation, African States must not forget the importance of the ways in which these arms are supplied and the great responsibility of the States bordering the countries where conflicts are currently taking place. I should like to ask the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS what technical difficulties are being encountered in the implementation of the Moratorium. What is his assessment of the role of the national commissions established thus far?

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Spain for his statement and questions.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): I warmly welcome you back, Mr. Minister, to the presidency chair, together with your fellow Ministers from Africa in this room. I am delighted that we also have among us senior representatives of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), whose briefings to us this morning were important.

Mr. President, congratulations on the establishment of this workshop, which we enthusiastically support. Small arms and light weapons are the predominant instruments of conflict in a great majority of recent conflicts, and it is estimated that at least half a million people die every year as a result of their use. This is something rightly of concern to the Security Council.

Illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons threatens international peace and security. It is closely connected with other forms of international organized crime and with terrorism. It poses a complex challenge, involving security, humanitarian and development dimensions. This is, sadly, too well-illustrated in West Africa, where small arms in the hands of rebels have exacerbated and prolonged conflicts.

Action needs to be taken by various players in different forums: first, we warmly encourage ECOWAS to work on practical steps to implement the well-constructed Moratorium it adopted in 1998. Mr. Chambas has described how this is being done. The Presidential Statement we are to adopt this morning includes several suggestions, including establishing an ECOWAS register of small arms and light weapons, strengthening national commissions, and introducing standardized end-user certificates for imported weapons. We encourage donors to provide additional assistance to ECOWAS to meet these challenges. And I would like to know whether the Executive Secretary can tell us more precisely what is needed in terms of items and cost, so that donors can respond to the requirements of his organization.

Secondly, we also encourage arms producing and exporting countries to exercise the highest degree of responsibility in small arms and light weapons transactions. The Governments of those States that transfer small arms and light weapons bear a

significant responsibility for controlling trade in such weapons. Strengthening export controls has to be an important step in the right direction. This includes careful scrutiny, not only of end-user certificates, but also of the wider environment in which the weapons are to be deployed.

The United Kingdom held a conference in London in January during which participants recognized the central role for the United Nations in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. This conference discussed how to strengthen efforts to implement relevant commitments in the United Nations Programme of Action. These include the need for States to have adequate laws and procedures to exercise effective control over these weapons transfers, as well as to assess applications for export authorizations according to strict national regulations and procedures. We look forward to working with partners to follow up the conclusions of this conference.

In this context, we welcome the establishment of the United Nations group of governmental experts that examines the feasibility of developing an international instrument, enabling States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. We believe that the Council itself must take a close interest in how all these initiatives are followed up and implemented.

Thirdly, it is crucial that United Nations sanctions are more effectively implemented. This was the motivation behind the proposal by the United Kingdom and France last year for an independent monitoring mechanism on sanctions. Mechanisms need to be developed to strengthen the capacity to enforce United Nations arms embargoes at the national, regional and international levels. We would like to work further with Council partners on this.

Others have made interesting proposals this morning. The Foreign Minister of Gambia, for instance, has pointed to the need for an international legal instrument to hold those who foster the small arms trade to greater account and for an international convention on mercenaries. We would be happy to consider these and other ideas, as well as ways of promoting greater coordination between all the different mechanisms and concepts in these areas.

In conclusion, we believe that trade in small arms and light weapons poses real and urgent problems. The human dimension of these problems, including their impact on women and families, should be a powerful incentive for Governments throughout the world, not just in West Africa, to coordinate their efforts in combating the proliferation of these deadly weapons.

The Council must therefore, from today onwards, act to ensure that ideas for curtailing the trade are put into effect and make a difference where it matters, in West Africa and elsewhere. The Presidential Statement we are considering is a good start and has our support.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his comments.

Before continuing, I would like to call on the Director of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Some questions and observations were raised. Perhaps they would be kind enough to answer them: specific measures on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, concerns expressed by the representative of Spain regarding child soldiers and activities for reintegration of these child soldiers, as well as the difficulties encountered to implement the Moratorium, and other comments and observations.

I call on the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Mr. Chambas: I will talk about the national commissions, and Mr. Sall will address the issues regarding the technical difficulties, the implementation and some of the requirements for more effective implementation.

A major part of the problem, of course, is the lack of information on or ignorance about this particular problem that plagues our subregion. The role of national commissions is, among other things, of course, to bring greater awareness to the various countries and their populations and to sensitize our peoples to the dangers of small arms and mercenaries. As we have been informed, 13 of our member States now indeed have national commissions, and the role of these commissions will be to begin work effectively to, first of all, ensure that member States incorporate the Moratorium in their laws. By this, I mean the Moratorium that they have agreed to — that these laws from the subregional level and at the various national levels are incorporated into national laws, that the

various security agencies, armed forces, police and other security apparatus become an active part of the implementation of the Moratorium. At the national level, the laws have to move on to provincial or regional levels, and down to the local levels. I think the example of Mali that was cited here, where this kind of decentralization has taken place, obviously needs to be encouraged and promoted, so that people should be sensitized down to the local grass-roots level as to what it is that needs to be done to curtail the activities of mercenaries and to reduce the spread — if not totally eliminate — these weapons which continue to be a threat to the peace and stability of West Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the Director of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) — two or three minutes, please.

Mr. Sall (*spoke in French*): I would just like to say that it is true that currently the first problem facing the implementation of the Moratorium is the need to maintain the strong political involvement that existed at the outset of this effort. I believe that, as the problems have become increasingly serious, we must continue to encourage political commitment on the part of the States and Governments of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

With regard to the technical questions that have been raised, I believe that the most difficult challenge we experienced was overcoming the ministerial competition that arose in each country with regard to the chairmanship of national commissions. That caused us delays in many countries. As sovereignty issues are often negotiated by ministries for foreign affairs at the same time that operations are carried out by defence and security ministries, it is not always easy to harmonize the problems that arise between the various ministries in an effort to have them understand each other and engage in collective efforts. That was not an easy thing to do. In fact, we worked on this issue quite a bit this year.

I also wish to refer to the availability of resources. I believe that one of the major constraints facing national commissions is the lack of necessary resources, beginning with human resources. Civil servants are appointed and are also responsible for other duties on a full-time basis: they work in ministries and public administration and therefore cannot systematically manage a programme to combat the proliferation of arms. But we have seen that even though civil servants may be otherwise occupied, the roles of facilitators and coordinators have made a difference. On the issue of financial resources, every operation I have mentioned — including training, border control, establishing registers and collecting and destroying arms — stems from national commissions, which actually carry out operations on the ground. Our resources are therefore quite limited. I wish to emphasize that only Guinea — and, to a lesser extent, Mali — have been able to mobilize strictly bilateral financing from donors to dedicate to programmes to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in their countries. Other ECOWAS countries are financed through national commissions solely from the funds that the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) can provide them. The idea is therefore to assist every country to establish a national programme that will make it possible to organize the mobilization of resources from international community donors.

In that vein, I am pleased to report to the Security Council that the Programme is trying to establish a national portfolio on non-proliferation in the 15 countries. We would hope to organize a round table some time around December 2003, at which we would invite the international community to assist us to face up to security issues on a country-by-country and programme-by-programme basis, while bearing in mind the specificities of each country.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the African Union and for Senegalese Abroad. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Gadio (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to extend my warm and fraternal congratulations to you, Mr. President. We are very proud to see you, an African, in a leadership role at the Security Council — which finds itself at a major crossroads in this month of March 2003. May God continue to guide and inspire you in your sensitive but noble mission.

My delegation associates itself with previous speakers in commending the very wise and appropriate choice of today's topic, which sums up a concern shared in the West African community, given that we

are determined to find long-lasting solutions to the twin problems crucial to peace and security in our subregion. Those problems are the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the activities of mercenaries.

Before going any further, I would like to invoke and embrace the memory of our fallen friend and companion Mr. Kofi Panou, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Togo, who fought at our side for peace and security in our subregion and on our continent.

The eruption of identity-based and irredentist movements, the increased appetite for certain natural resources — both on and beneath the ground — domestic, social and political schisms and trans-border conflicts have resulted in the illegal influx of a large number of small arms and light weapons into West Africa and in the rise of mercenary operations. Those weapons are accessible, inexpensive and easy to use. There are over 500 million such weapons throughout the world, and they have been employed in every conflict to beset West Africa. Wherever they have appeared, they have brought with them death and desolation, undermined efforts at economic and social development and compromised attempts at conflict resolution that have been the result of implementing acidulously negotiated agreements. Moreover, they have always served to promote the rise of both domestic and foreign criminal gangs, which have been lured by the appeal of easy money obtained through extortion and murder.

That picture is made all the more sombre by the recent emergence of mercenary war dogs who have come from distant and neighbouring lands, often brandishing the title of agents of "military companies". That euphemism is hardly convincing, judging from their terrible ability to be disruptive in the countries where they are brought to work. West Africa has already been a theatre of operations for those pathetic individuals, who have illustrated the hideous damage they can do in their flagrant denial of fundamental human rights in places such as the Biafra region of Nigeria, Benin and Guinea.

We must make no mistake about it. As stated in 1997 by Mr. Enrique Bernales Ballesteros, Special Rapporteur on mercenaries for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, mercenaries have the terrible ability to "undermine the maintenance of public order, the sovereign exercise of State authority and a nation's territorial integrity". Added to those burdens are the economic disruption and the fratricidal division of the mercenary phenomenon.

Faced with all those dangers, it is welcome that both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union have been proactively developing appropriate instruments. In fact, for a number of years, West Africa has been giving high priority to combating the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The determination of the leadership of our subregion was embodied in the 1998 adoption by the ECOWAS Abuja Summit of the Moratorium on the Import, Export and Manufacture of Light Weapons. That important progress was supported by the establishment of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), which, along with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), aims at establishing a culture of peace and security in the ECOWAS region. In that connection, we would like to commend the excellent leadership of our countryman Mr. Ibrahima Sall. We encourage him to continue his fight as he makes his appeal to the international community for more resources.

I can only add to that incomplete list by mentioning the Organization of African Union's adoption of the Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa, which is one of the most important instruments available to combat this terrible phenomenon.

Five months after the Security Council held a public meeting on small arms and light weapons the Guinean presidency had the very good idea of re-examining this point, adding a question that goes hand in hand with it: mercenary activities. In so doing, at a time when the international community's attention is riveted by the Iraqi crisis, Guinea was quite right to recall just how pressing this critical problem is in West Africa, since it has a direct impact on the lives of millions of people.

Senegal, all the same, believes that an end must be put to the subregional omertà — the code of silence, which continues to be the hallmark of political regimes in our subregion who, in plain sight of all, have mastered the art of spreading this widespread curse of small arms and those who use them — professional or apprentice, large or small — whom we call

mercenaries. We know these regimes. The international community often points a finger at them. The supreme irony of it all is that we are the ones who sometimes come to the defense of such regimes.

West Africa also calls for United Nations inspectors and international fact-finding commissions that will be able to prove without any shadow of doubt the bloody crimes of some political regimes in the subregion so that those regimes can be ostracized from the community of civilized and peaceful nations and disarmed or neutralized, one way or another. There lies the only legitimate debate today for the millions of displaced persons, children crippled by shameful mines and inconsolable weeping mothers from countries that have been abruptly overwhelmed by rebellions that destroy our already fragile futures.

While commending warmly my friend and bother François Fall, I would like to emphasize several other measures that my delegation believes should be taken and that the international community should initiate or support so as to stop once and for all the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and mercenary operations.

First, there is a need to strengthen and strictly apply all instruments concerning the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and mercenary activities and to review the Organization of African Unity Convention on mercenaries, given the new manifestations of this scourge and its links to terrorism. There should also be a mechanism to identify and trace the illegal flows of small arms and light weapons.

Secondly, there is a need for transparency in commercial and brokerage activities linked to arms; a ban on centres for training specialized mercenaries in subversive activities, who are discretely called "private military companies"; measures to bring to justice mercenaries involved in criminal activities related to terrorism and to extradite them, in keeping with domestic law and international instruments.

Thirdly, there is a need to promote programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, who might be tempted to engage in mercenary activities.

Fourthly, monitoring the transfer of small arms between States that produce and those that purchase them should be strengthened, in particular by using a twin tracking and marking system.

Fifthly, a special United Nations mechanism should be established to control inspections for West Africa, complemented by the creation of international commissions of inquiry, certain of whose conclusions could be submitted to the International Criminal Court. Senegal would particularly like to hear the opinion of members of our forum, especially our development partners on the Security Council.

In conclusion, real progress still must be made if we wish to extract our subregion from the quagmire of the dual ills of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and mercenary activities. Let us hasten to act, rather than always react, so that the shadowy network, which shamelessly brings together unscrupulous arms merchants and blood-stained mercenaries allied with some of our leaders, will dissolved once and for all and so, that West Africa, reconciled with itself, finds again the virtuous path to peace and prosperity.

On this hopeful note, Mr. President I congratulate you again on choosing this a critical topic. I wish you success in your presidency, with so many pressing items on the Security Council's agenda this month.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal for his warm and fraternal words, the encouragement he has given my country and the constructive proposals that he has made.

Mr. Negroponte (United States of America): We want to welcome you back to the Security Council, Mr. President, and to thank you for bringing the issue of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the use of mercenaries to the Security Council today. We think that this is a very important initiative on the part of your country.

We are also pleased to welcome your minister colleagues from the African continent who have joined this meeting today, as well as the representative of the Programme for Cooperation and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), the executive secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the representative of the African Union.

I would also like to thank your delegation for drafting the non-paper on the subject of our meeting today, which informs our current discussion. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons contributes to violence and suffering around the world, but the

situation in West Africa is particularly grave. The catalogue of conflict in the region is long, and regrettably the indiscriminate traffic in small arms and the use of mercenaries only exacerbates the situation.

To help stem the tide of violence, in October 1998 ECOWAS declared a moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons. The international community, including the United States, praised ECOWAS in 1998 for this landmark effort. The Moratorium called for the creation of individual national commissions to be the focal points for the implementation of measures at the State level.

Since that year, little progress has been made. It is disappointing that some States have not developed functional national commissions. Despite the 1998 Moratorium, West African societies remain awash with small arms and light weapons. Now is the time to complete this effort and move from political declaration to full practical implementation.

We continue to support all signatories to the ECOWAS Moratorium in their commitment, renewed in 2001, to carry out its mandate. It is crucial that ECOWAS members themselves take the necessary steps to effectively enforce their own Moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms and light weapons by fully establishing functional national commissions and implementing the Code of Conduct at the State level.

As my colleague Richard Williamson said in the October meeting on small arms and light weapons, the United States believes that solutions to the problem of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons must be practical and effective. The most effective ways of preventing small and light weapons from getting into the hands of those who will misuse them are implementing and enforcing strict export and import controls and strong arms-brokering laws, ensuring the security of national small arms and light weapons stockpiles, and destroying excess weapons.

Additionally, we must address the combatants themselves, not just the weapons they wield. The critical process of reintegration as a component of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) offers hope for soldiers who have known only violence and destruction. In Sierra Leone, 48,000 weapons have been turned in since the end of the conflict there.

Former rebels have been brought into camps where they have been given tools to begin the process of reintegration into society. Rebels have been given monetary payments that correspond to their ranks and were provided training to assist them in finding and obtaining jobs.

The international community, including individual States, such as Sweden, Norway, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Canada and France, has contributed generously to the implementation of the ECOWAS Moratorium and to the rebuilding of societies.

The United States has recently undertaken bilateral projects with Senegal and Guinea to destroy tens of thousands of excess small arms and light weapons. We have provided training and communications equipment to Guinea and Sierra Leone to assist them in controlling their borders with Liberia. We have also funded aerial surveillance to monitor illicit trafficking in the Mano River border region. We have funded a joint training programme to instruct Nigerian law enforcement officials on tracing and interdicting illicit small arms. The United States remains committed in its support for both the Security Council embargoes in the West African region and the ECOWAS Moratorium.

My delegation urges ECOWAS member States to establish effective national commissions and to implement the Code of Conduct for the Moratorium, as mandated in 1998 and 1999. I also urge ECOWAS member States and those States that supply illicit small arms to comply with two pertinent paragraphs in the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in July 2001.

Paragraph 12 of the Programme recalls,

> "the obligations of States to fully comply with arms embargoes decided by the United Nations Security Council in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations." (*A/CONF.192/15, article 12*)

Paragraph 13 declares that States believe,

> "that Governments bear the primary responsibility for preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and, accordingly,

should intensify their efforts to define the problems associated with such trade and find ways of resolving them." (*article 13*)

As we all approach the 2003 biennial review meeting that will be held here in New York in July, my delegation strongly urges all Governments to provide national reporting on efforts taken to implement the United Nations Programme of Action for Small Arms and Light Weapons to the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs. It is only through full, candid reporting by States in affected regions that the international community can take stock of progress made or lack thereof in implementing the United Nations Programme of Action and properly assess priorities for international action on small arms and light weapons in the future.

The United States is aware of the tragic history of the conflict in West Africa. We are ready and committed to work with all Security Council members and ECOWAS member States to find practical and effective ways to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the use of mercenaries that are threatening peace and security in West Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Permanent Representative of the United States for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): I would like to thank you at the outset, Mr. President, for scheduling this open debate on small arms and mercenaries in West Africa. The world holds its breath in view of the imminent danger of a major military confrontation in the Middle East with potential global consequences that no one can foresee. But we feel that it is equally important not to forget that there are conflicts in other parts of the world, involving not weapons of mass destruction but small arms, not highly trained, specialized soldiers but mercenaries and child soldiers, which nonetheless cause tremendous human plight, misery and death.

It is not easy to add to the list of important and useful thoughts that have already been put forward in this room today. However, I would like to stress a number of points that, from the viewpoint of the German Government, are particularly important and relevant.

First, it would not suffice to try to cure only the symptoms. In other words, we need to focus on the root causes of armed conflict that incite demand for the import of weapons and invite trafficking with them. Furthermore, we need to raise awareness of the mechanism that makes conflicts of interest turn into armed violence. Thirdly, we must ensure that small arms and light weapons get into the hands only of Government authorities and that they are firmly kept there. In this context, the trade in weapons and their further whereabouts need to be made much more transparent, and those having acquired them need to be held accountable for their further use.

With the Bamako Declaration and the Programme of Action of the Conference on Small Arms held in July 2001, important guidelines have been supplied with regard to the measures I have just cited. We need action, determination and, above all, a firm conviction among the parties involved of the need to implement the measures necessary to limit and eventually to stop the flow of illicit small arms and light weapons.

The Governments of the countries affected by armed conflict have a responsibility to adhere to certain standards of good governance, order and discipline. Governments have to show leadership that their populations can follow. The populations are encouraged to do their share in promoting peace and security. There are encouraging examples of grassroots movements taking their fate in their own hands and trying to come to terms with the problems of the reckless and irresponsible use of small arms and light weapons. In this context, I would like to warmly commend the work done by the women of the Mano River Union. We need more of that to happen. The declaration and prolongation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) import Moratorium on small arms and light weapons is an encouraging example of a regional initiative in a region that is most seriously affected by civil wars and armed conflicts. It is most welcome as a step to reduce import demand and to control legitimate imports in order to prevent illegal imports.

On the other hand, donor countries are called upon to support efforts made in West Africa to come to terms with the use of small arms and battling mercenaries. This can be done in many different ways. The focus of aid work should be on capacity building, for instance in the area of setting up national disarmament commissions, training trainers and providing know-how in different ways. Mercenaries need to have a realistic alternative for creating a decent

life. I would also like to mention the concept of arms for development, that is, the surrender of weapons in exchange for aid to the communities of those giving up their weapons. Policies have to be elaborated in such a way that the whole community will benefit from the readiness of armed persons to rid themselves of their weapons, not for the sake of personal profit but in order to benefit their own community as a whole. In this context, I would like to mention the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, which, under German chairmanship has coordinated a number of hands-on projects relating to the problems stemming from the surplus of small arms in West Africa.

Arms producing countries need to play by the rules regarding weapons transfers. Germany is in full support of the ECOWAS Moratorium and respects it, in line with European Union decisions and its political principles on the export of military equipment. We advocate strict adherence to export criteria for weapons. Not fuelling the conflict with the delivery of weapons and ensuring that legal weapons arrive at the legitimate certified end-user, in line with the exchanged information, are key elements of such criteria which we would like to see more widely accepted.

Last but not least, I wish to mention one piece of the disarmament puzzle which too often is overlooked or considered a soft issue: disarmament education, especially with regard to the recruitment of child soldiers. Disarmament starts at a very early age. Children need to learn that conflicts are not to be resolved through violence, but rather through intelligent bargaining. Children need to learn that the strength gained through the possession of a weapon does not help find lasting solutions. There are commendable efforts being made to develop such educational programmes, which also include West Africa. The work of The Hague Appeal for Peace, operating together with the United Nations Foundation and the Secretariat Department for Disarmament Affairs, is just one example. I appeal to the donor community to give more attention to these efforts.

Let me close by expressing my sincere hope that, for one of the regions of Africa most severely plagued by armed conflict, sustainable solutions will be found to bring a basic degree of stability to its peoples, and that this debate will give new impulses towards that goal.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Germany for his kind words.

The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m.